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CONTENT AND DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE CORPORATE HOMEPAGES

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ABSTRACT

Many Chinese companies have built their online presences; however few studies examine if the Chinese corporate websites follow recommended design guidelines. Through a content analysis of 487 websites of the largest Chinese companies, the study analyzes 55 content and design elements of the corporate homepages. A new coding scheme for Chinese web design is developed by utilizing existing schemes and identifying design elements unique to Chinese web including content, information architecture and usability, multimedia, and interactivity. In addition, the study also finds two unique design elements on Chinese corporate homepage. The differences in web design practices between American and Chinese corporate homepages are discussed.

Chinese corporate homepages reviewed in the study had content and design elements that met guidelines, but the study also finds several areas where corporations can improve their homepages. While a substantial majority of corporations adequately covered information about products and services, a large portion of websites did not display employment information, and many websites did not have a privacy policy detailing how user data would be used or shared. Usability of the websites is also hindered by the use of excessive links and multimedia features, and while most of the websites maintain a “Contact Us” link, only a small percentage cultivates a FAQ page. Navigability of websites is also impeded by a lack of search boxes on many of the websites. By enlarge there are significant content and design differences between American and Chinese corporation homepages, and American corporations maintain an advantage in terms of usability and design features such as search boxes, search maps, and FAQ pages.

The study is the first to systematically evaluate the current content and design elements of Chinese corporate websites, and the implications of the study’s findings can augment the performance of Chinese corporate websites to better serve company goals and objectives. For researchers, it presents a detailed empirical account of the corporate homepage status in China and provides a rich foundation for further research.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lixuan Zhang is an Associate Professor in the Hull College of Business at Augusta State University. She received a Ph.D. in Management Information Systems from the University of North Texas. Her research papers appeared in journals including *International Journal of Electronic Commerce, Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, Journal of Organizational and End User Computing* among others.

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